

NBC MEET THE PRESS

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KALB: Good day from Washington. I am Marvin Kalb, inviting you to Meet the Press with the Deputy Secretary of State, Kenneth Dam.

ANNOUNCER: Meet the Press, an unrehearsed press conference, is a public affairs presentation of NBC News.

KALB: Our guest today on Meet the Press is one of the top men in charge of U.S. foreign policy, Deputy Secretary of State, Kenneth Dam. A native of Kansas, a lawyer, a former official of the University of Chicago, Mr. Dam is the author of several books on international economics. He is also the closest associate of Secretary of State Shultz. Our reporters today are Hedrick Smith of The New York Times, Georgie Anne Gever of Universal Syndicate, Joseph Kraft of The Los Angeles Times Syndicate, and to open the questioning, our own regular panelist Bill Monroe of NBC News.

SMITH: Mr. Secretary, it's been some time since the attempt was made on the life of the pope in Rome. There are continuing accusations coming out of Italy that the Bulgarian secret service was behind the Turkish gunman who shot at the pope, and behind the Bulgarians were the Soviets. What is the American government's assessment of that situation? Is that true?

DAM: I don't think that the American government has a position on that question. We're interested in finding out what the magistrate in Italy determines. We obviously would be very concerned if that were to prove to be the case. But we don't have a position on that....

KALB: Why not? DAM: ...but we want to look at the facts.

KALB: Why don't you have a position on that? DAM: Why, don't we have...?

KALB: You know, why doesn't the United States government have a position on something that important? DAM: It's a question of fact.

KALB: Don't you have the facts? DAM: We do not.... Let me say this. We have, obviously, looked into this, through intelligence means and otherwise. But we do not have a sufficient basis for making a public declaration.

SMITH: There are charges by some people, including an author named Clare Sterling, who's made quite a study of this, has a book out on it, that the American government does know and is deliberately covering up the facts. What's your response to that charge? DAM: I don't have, I don't know of any basis for that statement.

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SMITH: You're saying it's a matter of not having enough information, not a matter of a policy decision not to make charges against the Bulgarians and the Soviets? DAM: There is not a situation in which we have a document which draws a firm conclusion, and we are suppressing that, the document, or refusing to speak about its existence. That is not the case.

KALB: Is there circumstantial evidence that would take you in that direction? DAM: There is some evidence of a general character that might lean in that direction. But it's a question of interpretation. I mean, all these situations are ambiguous, and different people draw different conclusions.

KALB: Thank you, Mr. Dam, for being our guest today on Meet the Press.

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